UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

GENERAL COMMITTEE
4th meeting
held on
Monday, 9 December 1996
at 9.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RAZALI
(President of the General Assembly)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/BUR/51/SR.4
3 July 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-82457 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS (continued)

Request for the inclusion of an additional item submitted by a number of countries (A/51/234 and Add.1-3)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider a request by a number of countries for the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea", which was contained in document A/51/234 and Add.1-3.

2. The representative of Germany had indicated his desire to address the Committee in accordance with rule 43 of the rules of procedure.

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Eitel (Germany) took a place at the Committee table.

4. Mr. EITEL (Germany), introducing the request contained in document A/51/234 and Add.1-3 in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure, said that the countries submitting the request, namely, Argentina, Belize, Finland, Germany, Jamaica, Lebanon, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Tunisia, wished to amend it slightly to read instead "Observer status for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the General Assembly".

5. The activities of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea were closely related to those of the United Nations in the field of the law of the sea and ocean affairs. As the central institution created under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea for the peaceful settlement of disputes, the Tribunal needed to be aware of all developments relating to the oceans and to the general principles of peaceful settlement of disputes which were reflected in the work of the General Assembly. Similarly, the Tribunal's work would contribute to the development of the law of the sea and of the general principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, which the General Assembly might wish to take into account in its own work. Observer status for the Tribunal in the Assembly would greatly enhance such a useful flow of information.

6. Mr. TERENCE (Burundi) said that, even though it was itself a landlocked country, Burundi supported the request for the inclusion of the item on the granting of observer status for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the General Assembly because of the importance of the sea to all of mankind.

7. The Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly should include the additional item, as orally revised, in the agenda of the fifty-first session.

8. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

9. Mr. Eitel (Germany) withdrew.

Request for the inclusion of an additional item submitted by Italy (A/51/235)

10. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the request by Italy for the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Proclamation of 21 November as World Television Day", which was contained in document A/51/235.

11. The representative of Italy had indicated his desire to address the Committee on the matter in accordance with rule 43 of the rules of procedure.

12. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Fulci (Italy) took a place at the Committee table.

13. Mr. FULCI (Italy) recalled that on 21 and 22 November 1996, the first World Television Forum had been held at the United Nations. During that event, more than 140 leading media figures from around the globe, representing more than 50 countries, had discussed the growing significance of television in the changing contemporary world, the opportunities offered by the current technological revolution in communications, which vastly increased the possibilities of cultural exchange, the role of both private and public broadcasters in providing information on global events and the strengthening of the partnership between the United Nations system and the international media.

14. During the Forum, broadcasters from both the public and private sectors had supported the idea of establishing an annual World Television Day, to be celebrated each 21 November by global exchanges of television programmes focusing in particular on such issues as peace and security, economic and social development and the enhancement of cultural exchanges. As a consequence, it would seem appropriate for the General Assembly to give formal recognition to a day on which special attention would be devoted, by broadcasters all around the world, to the critical issues faced by the international community.

15. Italy, which had prepared the draft resolution contained in annex II to document A/51/235, had borne the expenses connected with the holding of the first World Television Forum and was prepared to join with other Member States in financing the future observance of World Television Day. The draft resolution would therefore have no programme budget implications for the Organization.

16. Ms. WILMSHURST (United Kingdom) said that the last-minute request by Italy recalled the difficulties which her delegation had had earlier with the Assembly's recent establishment of an International Civil Aviation Day. The Committee should observe the procedures for the proclamation of international years set out in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 and adopted by the General Assembly in its decision 35/424. In accordance with those criteria, a final decision on a proposal for an international year should be taken by the General Assembly, not earlier than one full year after the

introduction of the proposal, thus allowing the views of all Member States to be taken into account and allowing the competent organs to make a thorough assessment of the proposal in the light of its practical desirability and the probability of real results. She wondered whether it was really necessary for the Committee to take urgent action on the request, particularly since most of the Main Committees had completed their work.

17. Mr. FULCI (Italy), replying to the statement by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the request had been submitted without delay at the conclusion of the World Television Forum. The 1980 guidelines of the Economic and Social Council applied to the proclamation of international years and not international days. Indeed, paragraph 9 of the guidelines provided that international years should be proclaimed only when celebrations of shorter duration, such as a month, a week or a day, would not suffice. Moreover, the Committee's failure to take action on the request would jeopardize the resources which might otherwise be forthcoming from both the public and private sectors, since decisions on budget allocations were taken well in advance of disbursement.

18. Mr. TERENCE (Burundi) said that the proclamation of a World Television Day would symbolize the Organization's commitment to the objective of facilitating the global exchange of experiences and know-how in the field of television. Developing countries, in particular, would welcome the opportunity to discuss issues of communication via television and the impact of television on development and democratization. The fact that the current part of the fifty-first session was nearing its end should not prevent the Committee from taking a decision on the matter.

19. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) recalled that several delegations and the Chairman himself had expressed concern over requests for the inclusion of new items at the current late stage of the Committee's work. Rule 15 of the rules of procedure stipulated that additional items proposed for inclusion in the agenda should be of an important and urgent character. While it was not for his delegation to judge the importance of the item, the latter certainly could not be conceived as being of an urgent character. The Committee simply could not go on proclaiming international days until all 365 days of the year had been used up. He therefore proposed that the Committee should not take a decision on the matter in the closing days of the current part of the fifty-first session and recommend instead its inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-second session, in accordance with rule 40 of the rules of procedure.

20. Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Second Committee, cautioned that the last-minute inclusion of new items in the agenda undermined the efforts being made to streamline and rationalize the agendas of the Main Committees, a matter that should be of concern to all members.

21. Mr. LEGAL (France) said that, given the importance of the international media to the work of the Organization, the Committee should take a decision on the substance of the request. France congratulated Italy on its initiative and fully supported its request for the inclusion of the item. While the plenary Assembly might itself decide to defer action because it deemed the matter not to

be of an urgent character, it was not in the tradition of the Committee to defer its own decisions on such requests, particularly since he was unaware of any major political obstacle in the way of a decision. The question of the urgency of the request must be viewed in relative terms. He personally did not think that it would necessarily give rise to a lengthy debate.

22. Mr. FULCI (Italy) supported the statement made by the representative of France with regard not only to the substantive merit of the Italian proposal but also to its urgent character.

23. Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines) said that, given the persistent complaints about the lack of interest by the international media in the work of the United Nations, every effort should be made to encourage that interest and to draw attention to the role of both public and private television in providing up-to-date information on international affairs, particularly in the developing countries.

24. Mr. MINOVES-TRIQUELL (Andorra) thanked the Government of Italy for its generosity in organizing the first World Television Forum. The establishment of a World Television Day could help to generate greater interest by the media in the work of the United Nations at no cost to the Organization. In terms of its agenda, the Committee's work had proceeded smoothly thus far and some little time might therefore be found to enable a decision to be taken on the Italian request.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee was clearly divided on the matter. Without entering into the substance of the request, he therefore wished to propose that the matter be deferred to the resumed fifty-first session.

26. Mr. TERENCE (Burundi) said that there was a clear majority in favour of recommending the inclusion of the item. A few delegations had concerns not about the substance of the request but about its timing. There was therefore no reason why a decision could not be taken on the substance at the current stage.

27. Mr. LEGAL (France), supported by Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. FLORES (Honduras), Mr. SEYDOU (Niger) and Mr. FULCI (Italy), said that, while he agreed with the Chairman's proposal, the Committee should make a recommendation immediately even if that recommendation was that the item should be included in the agenda of the resumed fifty-first session.

28. Ms. WILMSHURST (United Kingdom) said that her delegation could go along with a recommendation that the matter should be considered by the Assembly in plenary meeting at the resumed fifty-first session in 1997.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that he hoped that there would be no further requests for the inclusion of items in the agenda of the fifty-first session at the current late stage of the Committee's work, particularly since nearly all the Main Committees had completed their work. He took it that the Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly should itself determine in plenary meeting when the item should be considered.

30. The Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly should include the additional item in the agenda of the fifty-first session.

31. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item should be considered directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the General Assembly would determine when the item would be considered during the fifty-first session.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.